

# SPORTSMAN FLIES HIGH

by Lawrence A. Keating

**EIGHTH INSTALLMENT**  
"Look out! Hey!" The truck driver careened his vehicle near the edge of the road at another mad lunge of her car. "Keep away! Get that thing away from here!"

The second man leaned out. "Go on, honey—we don't want an accident," he begged. "Listen, this thing would bust your car to kindling. You too! He all but pitched at the coupe as it veered at him and his comrade jerked the truck aside. The man shrank back inside the cab.

"—drunk and crazy as—" Colwell heard.

Irita went into a new series of corkscrew lunges and a new series of gestures and calls. The coupe kept edging the big truck nearer and nearer the edge of the road. The driver was increasingly nervous; his companion tensely awaited the crash.

It came. A final reckless swoop brought a harsh scrape of fenders. The truck lurched away to avoid a bad smashup. Its double rear wheels mired in the soft shoulder of the road and the driver abruptly was bereft of strength to get it back. There was a prolonged sucking sound, a series of yells and warnings from both occupants of the truck—then a crash.

One headlamp shattered against a tree. A fender scraped its tire. The big five-ton truck with Acme Carriers, Inc., U. S. Customs Bonded, Permit 229, painted on her side, came to a dead halt. Irita also stopped. Colwell slipped unseen out the far door, a long, keen edged knife in his hand. He hurried to the rear of the truck. Irita climbed out with the air of a woman scorned and about to do something important. She carried a heavy wrench in one hand. "What d'you mean, runnin' into me?" she demanded shrilly as she went to meet the pair.

"What you talkin' about? Lookit that busted light!" the driver moaned, pointing. "Who's going to pay for that, huh? Damn all drunken drivers! A woman, too. Why—"

"Who says I'm a woman? Who says I'm a lady. Thasswhat I am!" She straightened proudly. "I'm a lady. What you mean bending my fender? Have you arrested. Terrible driving. Want to kill me? Cantcha see where you're going?"

She carried it out with zest, as if she enjoyed it. But it was hard, hateful work. Irita declaimed, complained, and berated them. She had the men perspiring. They began to think she was right and that they were wholly wrong. Until at length she seemed to lose interest, and turned back to her coupe.

"Teach you good lesson," she muttered crankily. "Do it again! I'll have you arrested." With that she banged the door on her side, started up the motor and backed gingerly from contact with the truck fender. Colwell, crouched low beside her, waited until they were a mile away from the truck. Then he straightened with a sigh.

"That was a rotten job to ask you to do. But Irita, you did it nobly. And we've got 'em in the rear deck—brushes from Holland. It was right on the edge of the tailgate waiting to be taken!" They wheeled at a fast pace down the concrete road. "Two hundred and fifty thousand in snow! Irita, that'll put us—"

"Dan!" Her exclamation was followed by a leap of the coupe that threw his head back. At the same

instant she swerved aside. A sedan shot at them through the dark. It bore no light, and Irita, at sight of the thing lunging from nowhere, had to act with split-second precision.

The cars seemed doomed to meet headon; but at the last possible instant the driver of the sedan twisted aside and Irita's twist gave them a foot between.

Glass tinkled. There was a thin spray on the girl's arm. Again it tinkled as the second orange stab of flame came from the other car. Its tires shrieked on the concrete. The car plunged like a piston to back and turn. The spray of the rear window stung Colwell's cheek.

"Irita—step on it—they're turning! I'll give 'em something to chew on, but git! It's Graber and Quillen and Vael!"

Colwell sat reading a newspaper in his office on the eleventh floor of the Lawyers and Doctors Building, in the suite formerly occupied by that well known defender of criminals, Arthur McDonald. The opaque glass corridor door had been replaced by one of metal finish in imitation of walnut which bore the simple inscription: The Federalist. Transoms were of metal and immovable. Such glass as the suite still boasted was bulletproof.

Dan had treated himself to a box of fifty cent cigars of the brand Otto Graber smoked, one of which he puffed luxuriously as with his feet on the desk and powerful body tilted back in his chair, he absorbed the day's news. He took the cigar from his mouth, flicked ashes on the floor and replaced it. Sighing, he turned a page of his paper to read the Around Town column.

"Word reached us today," he read, "that Otto Graber, partner with Horace Vael in a local detective agency, suffered a hunting accident four days ago. Graber and a party of friends were starting from their camp near Ewing, Pennsylvania, early one morning when one of their guns accidentally discharged. Graber suffered a shoulder wound which local doctors pronounced not serious. Otto, well known as an aviation enthusiast, expects to fly his Monogram plane back to be at his desk in the sleuth agency next Monday morning."

Dan puffed interestedly on his cigar as he re-read the item. His eyes squinted at the window. Graber had a neat alibi worked up. Very good. Even to the "accidental" discharge of a gun. But as a matter of fact the "accident" had occurred out on the Telegraph Road when Graber just barely missed getting that two hundred fifty thousand dollars worth of snow which Colwell now was offering to sell him for forty thousand.

He tossed the newspaper on his desk. Yawned and stretched. It was tiresome waiting. Colwell wished the boys would meet his price and get the thing over. Forty thousand from Graber, forty also from Quillen. Each side acting independently, the same Boston bag of snow sold both parties—if it could be so worked—would net Colwell a sweet eighty grand.

His telephone tinkled. "Graber or Quillen?" Dan asked without a moment's hesitation. "Oh, Lefty! I'm here till I get my price or rot. By the way, it goes up five thousand a day from now on. You fellows have to pay me for all the time I'm wasting. You think I enjoy putting off my little vacation?"

About to replace the ear piece, he listened. A grin overspread his

blunt face at the torrent of heated curses. Dan felt gingerly of the adhesive tape crisscross on his head. "Certainly I'll sell to Graber! First come, first served. So you boys fell out again? Yes, yes, I know, Otto is ambitious that way. So it's every man for himself now—and that goes for me too."

He listened a moment. "Never mind threats—ring me up when you're bringing in the cash. Where can you make a buy like this? Sure, I know. But that two hundred and fifty G's wasn't all your money. What about McDonald and Graber and Vael. Probably Catterby too."

"No, I'm sitting tight." Of a sudden his eyes kindled as the voice at the other end changed. "What, Okay? This afternoon at three? Well, I tell you, Lefty: as a special favor, see, I will hold the stuff for you. It's a deal. But not a minute after three! Remember, when you come, come alone. Else you don't get in!"

He hung up. The grin deepened on his face and Dan laughed aloud. So Quillen had given in; he would buy! But he could not raise forty thousand in cash until afternoon, he said. Colwell rubbed his hands with exuberance. One signed up—that was great. Now to hook Graber.

Forty-five minutes passed. Dan stirred at the summons of the buzzer. He swung his feet from the desk, felt for the gun in his shoulder holster, and moved for the door. But without touching its knob he stealthily opened a wire wall screen panel. The person outside could not see in, nor would any tiny pinpoints of light suddenly show through yellow kalsomine. But Colwell could see out, and he raised one eyebrow as he recognized Helen Fane.

He thought a moment. Then he unlocked and unbolted the door.

"Hello! Come in—if you're alone." She smiled. As more than once before he was struck by her regal grace and the simple, yet effective costume she wore. The little maroon hat tilted archly over her hazel eyes matched the rabbit's-hair maroon wool dress that showed through her open mink coat. It was chilly out today with the crisp tang of winter. Colwell smiled appreciatively.

He closed and locked the door with care. "Well," he said, "you've tapped my wire and probably have a dictaphone planted, so I'll have to be polite, won't I? Have a chair. The inner office please. Cigarette? I hope you brought a fat wad of Graber's money. Hear you and he are thick again."

She smiled up at him, shrugging. They both were aware that every word said could be heard clearly by Otto. Under a fake name he had rented the next suite south. Helen leaned to the match he cupped, then sat back in her chair and blew a little wriggling smoke ring.

"Why not be reasonable?"

Colwell feigned surprise. "As if I'm not!"

Helen Fane took a tiny memo pad from her purse, and a patented pencil. As she talked she wrote a few words, slowly and carefully. "You're not a very good insurance risk these last few days. After all, fifteen thousand is more than a month. Or a year. It's a lot of money. Hard to come by. And you could have it so easily!" Helen purred.

"Fifteen is chicken feed. Look here," he told her earnestly. "I'm boosting the price five thousand a day. Tomorrow, forty-five thousand. Next day, fifty. Take it or leave it. Maybe I'll use the stuff myself," Dan grinned. "Why not? There's enough to last till I'm eighty."

"You'll never live to eighty," Finishing her writing, she handed the slip to Colwell. He read it, raised his eyes to hers, and tucked the paper away. "How much did you bring?"

"Twenty-five," she said. "Nothing doing. Waste of time. Just out of cussedness, I want forty. You tell Graber I'm not coming down and he can send you back with forty or not at all."

He spoke with impatience but it seemed not to register on the girl. She smoked her cigarette in silence. The telephone rang. "No," Dan said into it directly, "you can't come in, Otto. Your little messenger here is enough for now. Anyhow, I want to get better acquainted—"

"What's that?" His face changed as he listened. "Oh, Sommers! Sorry, I expected someone else. What is it?"

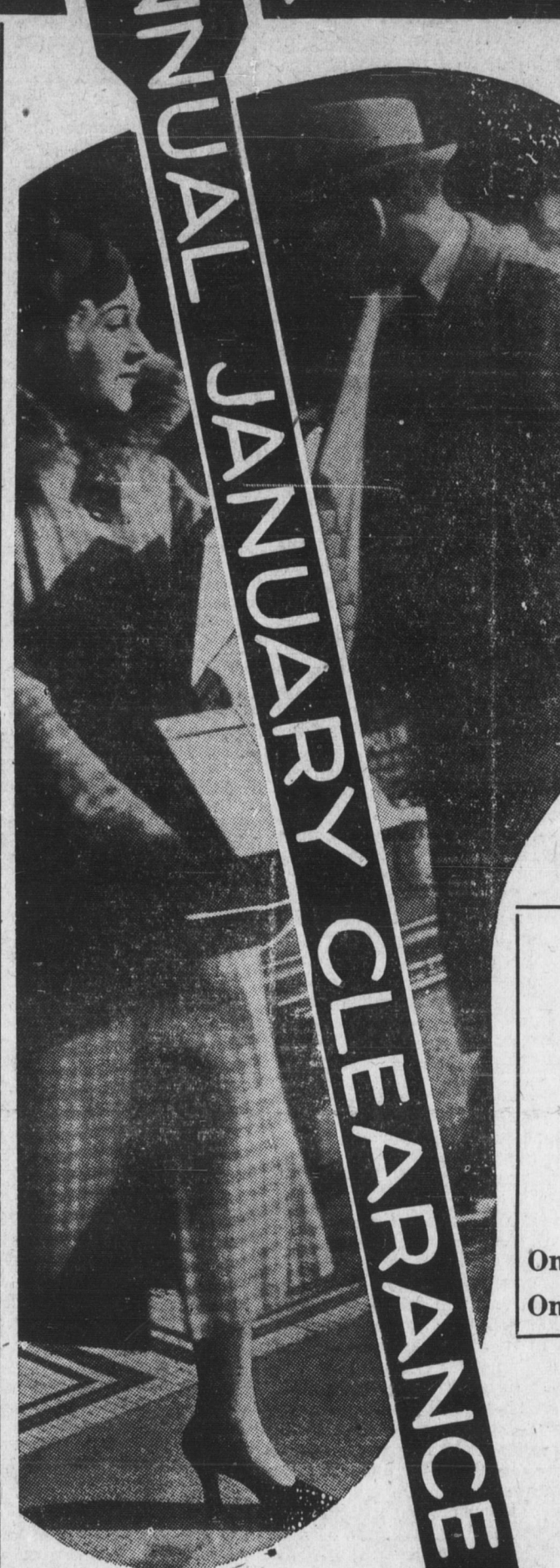
"Now Mr. Colwell, you gave strict orders not to be disturbed," the building superintendent went on. "But I'm afraid I need to get a man in your office for about half an hour. Steamfitter. Oh, he's dependable! The suite next yours burst a radiator and they're all connected, and he must get in your place to shut it off. Built for one suite, you see, but when Mr. McDonald took separate space—"

Colwell considered, frowning. He could rely on Sommers, of course; he had paid the man enough. "Well," he said in some reluctance, "all right then. Provided you bring him up. I want to see you with him so there's no mistake, but of course you don't need to come in."

Continued Next Issue

One ounce of oil will cover nine acres of water.

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**Dixie Graham**  
City Tax Collector.